



Testimony of City Councilor Elyse Tipton

In SUPPORT of LD 1743: An Act to Allow Municipalities to Prohibit Firearms Within Their Municipal Buildings and Voting Places and at Their Municipal Public Proceedings
Before the Judiciary Committee of the 132nd Maine Legislature
May 1, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Elyse Tipton, and I serve as a City Councilor in South Portland. I'm here today to testify in support of LD 1743.

Last November, during a South Portland City Council meeting that included Senator Carney and Representatives Matt Beck and Chris Kessler, a man approached the public podium. He spoke angrily about taxes and immigrants, accused local officials of spreading "left-wing propaganda," and left the meeting declaring he would next "go and give Susan Collins a piece of my mind."

After he left, a resident who had been sitting in the audience emailed the Council. He wrote that it was "beyond disturbing" to see this man "showing everyone in the room that he had a gun stuck in his belt."

South Portland Police Chief Dan Ahern later let Council members know that the individual is known to law enforcement, and "taunts folks with his right to carry in public spaces"—deliberately testing limits and daring someone to stop him.

But we can't stop him—not under current state law. And that's the problem that LD 1743 seeks to fix.

Right now, in the places where residents come together to vote, to debate public budgets, or to speak on behalf of their neighbors, someone can walk in, visibly armed, and the municipality has no authority to say no.

State legislators have already decided that firearms don't belong in the State House. Now you are being asked to consider what local government officials and community members experience in town and city halls around Maine, as we, too, do the work of democracy.

When someone who is angry, agitated, and armed shows up at a council meeting, our police can't remove them unless there's a specific threat. That's reactive, not preventive.

LD 1743 is a common-sense, narrowly tailored solution that simply allows municipalities to set their own policies about firearms in the spaces where American democracy happens.

This bill does not ban guns statewide. It respects local control. It creates clear authority for municipalities to decide for themselves whether firearms are appropriate at city hall, during council meetings, or at polling places.

It makes sense to protect the integrity of public service and public participation throughout Maine. Not only do Maine people know the tragedy of an assault with a gun, even the visibility of a weapon at a government site sends a chilling message to everyone who is there to speak up, ask questions, or serve.

LD 1743 is an overdue measure that gives municipalities the same right the Legislature has already claimed for itself: the right to protect its people in places of governance.

I urge you to pass this bill and help ensure that every person in Maine—whether they are speaking, listening, or leading—can feel safe participating in their local democracy.